

THE
TRUE POLICY
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN
CONSIDERED.

By SIR FRANCIS BLAKE, BART.

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AN observation was made in a pamphlet, entitled, An Explanation of a Proposal for the Liquidation of the National Debt,* “That Land and other
“ Taxes amount, in what we spend, to

* See the said Pamphlet, Page 19.

“ fifteen shillings in the pound.” But it
 ell to the lot of that estimate to be look-
 f
 ed upon as an exaggeration of our suffer-
 ings, on which account a more satisfac-
 tory explanation was given in a postscript
 annexed to the second edition of the said
 pamphlet. Since which time, a fresh
 objection has been started to the estimate
 of fifteen shillings in the pound, on the
 following suggestion, that it includes the
 sum total of our present payments to
 Government; and as it is not meant to
 ease the subject of the customs,* what-

* The plan alluded to provides for the continuance
 of the customs. See Proposal for the Liquidation of
 the National Debt, Page 12.

ever proportion that impost bears to the whole revenue, in like proportion shall we still continue to be loaded over and above the proposed payment of 3s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ *. Now it is generally understood, that the whole revenue, compared with that part of it which is produced by customs, is as three to one; from whence it follows, that we shall have to pay to Government five shillings more in the pound than the Author of the said Proposal was aware of, viz. 5s. for customs, besides 3s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ in lieu of taxes, making together 8s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$.

To give this fresh objection its full force, let us suppose for a moment the

* See Explanation of Proposal, Page 17.

case to be as it is there suggested. “ That
 “ Taxes and Customs together do not
 “ amount to more than fifteen shillings in
 “ the pound, and that five of the fifteen
 “ result from customs.” What does it
 prove? It only shews that we shall not
 be so much benefitted as I have said; it
 does not follow, that we shall not be ad-
 vantaged at all by the bargain; for before
 that can be the case, we must suppose the
 two systems to be placed precisely upon
 the same level in respect of payment, a
 supposition so glaringly false and absurd,
 as not to stand in need of serious refuta-
 tion. For let what will be the rate which
 is now paid for taxes, whether it is ten
 shillings

shillings in the pound, or fifteen, one point is clear, that as much as three and twopence halfpenny falls short of one or other of those sums, so much shall we be gainers by the new system.

Now 3s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ in the pound, is ninepence halfpenny less than is paid at present, in some counties, for land-tax alone, and is short of the lowest computed rate* of other taxes six shillings more, making together six and ninepence halfpenny; a sum which, compared with the proposed

* Computing the pressure of taxes at ten shillings in the pound.

payment of 3s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ creates a difference, between our loss of it on one hand, and our gain on the other, of more than four hundred per cent*. We see, therefore, that even in this light considered, which is the least favourable, the plan holds out a strong temptation,

But in order to bring home to our feelings the present question, let us suppose the Minister of this country addressing himself in some such words as these to men of property :——“ It is my desire to
 “ administer relief to you in respect of the
 “ public burdens. But before any steps

* To save 6s. 9d. $\frac{1}{4}$ out of a ten shillings payment, creates the difference named.

“ are

“ are taken in this business, be pleased to
 “ inform me how far it will be agreeable
 “ to you to co-operate with me in this
 “ good design. You, Gentlemen, whose
 “ contribution is four shillings in the
 “ pound for land, you who pay three,
 “ two, or one shilling, who bear besides
 “ the burden of all other taxes in com-
 “ mon with those who are not affected
 “ by that impost, *——whether do you
 “ chuse to continue the payment in such
 “ sort of six, seven, eight, nine, or ten
 “ shillings in the pound, the lowest re-
 “ spective sums which are now paid by
 “ you in taxes, or in lieu of such pay-

* The land-tax.

“ ment,

“ ment, an annual pound rate of three
 “ and two-pence halfpenny ?”

Can it be possible that any man, or
 body of men, would hesitate to embrace
 so advantageous an offer ? And yet this is
 the identical proposition which has lain
 before us years together unbefriended.
 But it is with us, perhaps, as it was with
 the rustic who stood by the stream that
 the waters might pass,—“ we wait the
 “ coming of an upright Minister to make
 “ us the offer.” But will that excuse
 acquit us to ourselves, our children, and
 our country ? Failing that man of virtue,
 wherefore then do we not discharge our
 duty,

duty by uniting together *constitutionally* to enforce performance? * We have the power as yet, want we the will to do this act of justice, and, indeed, of mercy? The time may come when the tables shall be turned upon us. A little space may teach us what it is to have the will without the power; a little space, I say, if we let slip the precious remnant that is left of opportunity.

I have shewn in my answer to the foregoing objection, that even admitting it in full force, it does not materially affect the present proposition. But to speak what I

* See Proposal, Page 117.

think of the matter, the facts do not appear to me to be fairly stated in that objection ; for customs, independent of taxes, would not of themselves annoy us in any such way as is there described. The sums they raise would then be simply added, like other articles of expence, to the prime cost of the goods, and in that case would be less felt than a pound rate would be of two shillings. We may, therefore, conclude, that the sum total of our contributions to Government would not, probably, be more than five shillings in the pound, under the proposed arrangement, whereas it is set down in the objection, at 8s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ *.

* See before, Page 3.

But

But as it is not possible to put this question beyond the power of cavil in any other way, than by seating ourselves at once upon the throne of certainty respecting payment, a thought occurs, whether it would not be more advantageous, as well as satisfactory, to simplify the plan throughout: It goes already to the utter abolition of taxes, let it go to Customs in like manner; let us make of this Island a *Free-port*, and let the whole revenue be collected by a pound rate, which will then raise as much at five, as is now produced at fifteen shillings. That is to say, it will raise a revenue of fifteen millions, supposing that part of the in-

come of individuals which is here spoken of, to be no more than sixty millions *per annum* *. And, therefore, setting aside for the public expenditure, the round sum of 14,500,000 l.†, there will remain a clear annual overplus of half a million. How this should be employed has been said already‡; but of that saying so sweet

* The rental of lands, houses, and public funds, valued at sixty millions *per ann.* See Proposal for Liquidation of the National Debt, p. 10.

† The annual public expenditure, is stated at 14,478,181 l. in the Report from the Select Committee. See Page 28.

‡ In the pamphlet, entitled, The Propriety of an Actual Payment of the Public Debt Considered. See p. 22.

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is the sound, and so much in tune with British ears, I cannot help repeating,—
 “That of all possible applications of a surplus revenue, the best and wisest is the
 “naval service.” To throw back the remnant into our pockets, what would it do for us? It would add to the annual weight of our purse—What? Two-pence in the pound!* O! well indeed might Britain say, degenerate sons, if such a circumstance could weigh upon our minds, if such a sum were better saved in our conceit, than freely spent to gain us in return the lost dominion of the seas. As to all other loss, I look upon it as nothing, compared with

* Two-pence in the pound upon sixty millions is half a million exactly.

the loss of our naval superiority, for that involves our certain and speedy downfall. Our rivals boast *, and we ourselves confess the circling sea, which once was ours, is now no longer so. But if we are not lost to all the feelings of Englishmen, if any wish remains to be what we have been, a great nation, or even an independent one, it must be recovered. There is no possibility of waving a claim, which is not only necessary to our well-being, but indispen-

* The fact is notorious, that certain Powers have ceased to perform the ceremony of saluting the English flag; it is equally well known, that no steps have been taken on our part, as was usual in such cases, to enforce the performance. The Dutch, indeed, do still salute, and so, in like manner, do some other nations, but France in particular, *our seeming would-be friend*, has betrayed a most insolent determination to stand by any consequences to which the refusal may subject them.

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fible to our existence. Such is our right of fovereignty in the narrow feas, and fuch the honours of the flag as incident thereto, and emblematic of our right. To give up thefe, is giving that which is not ours to *give*, but only to *retain*. Had it been a right which was optional in us to keep or relinquish at pleasure, the cafe had been altered, but it is not fo; it is like unto life, a right of obligation, which we are bound to defend to the laft gasp. And though it cannot be called in ftrictnefs a natural right, but an acquired one, yet by long ufage it has grown as it were into a right of that defcription, and fo it has been acknowledged for ages paft by all the world.

But

But it is not necessary for my purpose to enter further into this argument; the single fact which concerns us is manifest, viz. “ That by means of our naval power, we “ have risen to be the people which we are ;” and if by no less exertions it could be recovered, its vast importance strikes my mind so forcibly, I’d garter round this Island with a fleet ;—I’d station ships from pole to pole :—To pay for this, I’d live upon the thing I hate the most, an onion by the day for years to come, and slake the noisome thirst which it would raise with Heaven’s dew, but I would compass my design. All this I would agree to do most willingly, and so
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no doubt would thousands more, but happier far are we by whom these things may be atchieved without recourse being had to such extremities.

Some men lay mighty stress upon commercial treaties, but we need them not. Abolish customs, and the commerce of the world is ours without their aid. At least we should not deal in such a way with those whom wisdom has proscribed. The maxim holds with many as with few, a nation like a man, "May smile and smile, and be a villain." So smile our courtly neighbours across the Channel, and so let them smile, but let us not be duped thereby.

thereby. They were our enemies, our antient deadly foes; they are so still, and will be so for ever more. To view them thus, we view them as we ought; and knowing them for foes, we likewise know to what we have to trust, and therefore wisely stand upon our guard. But taking them for friends, 'tis poison that we take which puts us past the power of caution. Our most inveterate foes made seeming friends, the consequence will be, this unsuspecting nation will turn traitor to itself; that is, we shall not watch at all, or we shall slumber when we should be watching.—O! then, my gallant Countrymen, beware in time! Remember Troy! Invincible

vincible by arms, it fell by wiles; so you shall fall by this same hollow treaty. To let them merchandize and settle here*, you give admittance to the *Trojan horse*. Remember too, the Serpent in the tale, which they will copy, if you give them leave, and help the moral by your sad example.

If any doubt remains, we have only to turn our eyes to the great works which are carrying on at Cherbourg, to be fully convinced of their duplicity, and how indispensably necessary it is for us to pay immediate and unremitting attention to

* It is so provided in the Commercial Treaty with France. See Art. 5.

naval concerns. From those works we may form a judgment of the deep designs of the French Court, and of their fixt determination to spare no pains, nor any expence, by means of which they may provide more effectually, in future, for their own security, or our annoyance. We all know how much they suffer in a rupture with us, from the circumstance of having no considerable station for ships in the Channel. To remedy this evil, they are constructing a harbour at Cherbourg, extending three miles into the sea. Their method is, to erect at given distances, stupendous rocks, or piers of stone, and afterwards to fill up the intermediate

mediate spaces ; leaving, however, at certain commodious intervals, lateral openings, for the more ready ingress and egress of vessels. To give some faint idea of the vastness of this undertaking in point of expence, and the value of course which they set upon it, I have still to add, that the estimate of preparatory wood work only for this design, is two millions four hundred thousand pounds of our money. —Engineers of the first note in this country are, indeed, of opinion, that the scheme will not answer: They say the projected harbour, admitting the practicability of perfecting it, which yet is problematical, must necessarily choak up for
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want of a strong cleansing current from behind, to prevent or remove obstructions. But be this as it may, the feature indicates what passes in their mind, and serves to shew to what a wretched state of insignificance we shall soon be reduced, were we to place dependence on their professions. But that which is most affronting to this nation is, that they should have judged us capable of being imposed upon by so gross a specimen of duplicity. I trust, however, it will prove in the end to be no derogation from our character, but rather from theirs, who have been weak enough to imagine, that we could be duped, and take them for friends, when
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at that very instant in which they were feeding us with frothy hopes of perpetual amity and intercourse, they were heaping insult upon insult daily, and making beside, by works which have no level but against us, considered as enemies, the most awful preparations for impending war.

But it may be said, that by such exertions on our part as are here recommended, we shall lay ourselves open to the like imputation of hostile intentions. And what if we should expose our purpose to such construction, have they not set the example? Have they not led the way by their preparations, and shall we not follow?

low? Shall *we* desist to 'scape unmerited reproach, and *they* be left to perfect their design of our undoing? Is it not our duty to provide for ourselves, as well as it is theirs, or is it in them only a mark of wisdom, to be well prepared to meet emergencies? Let who will subscribe to this doctrine, it is not for me to do so, who am verily persuaded there is no safety for us, but in their belief, that we have the power, and will exert it, to vindicate our rights from their encroachment.

But even if these considerations were out of the question, still it is our duty to improve our situation; and in what way
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can this be done more effectually, than by those means which are here suggested? Our own immediate interest as individuals is essentially provided for, as also the honour and welfare of the nation at large, and surely these of themselves are temptations sufficiently strong to extort compliance. What shall we say then, if to these advantages is superadded the preservation of our hard-fought liberties, and as therewith inseparably connected, the future glory, fame, and independency of these imperial realms!

Casting my eye over what has been written, it occurs to me, that I may not

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possibly

possibly have made myself well understood in one particular, I shall therefore beg leave to observe, should any one (who honours these remarks by reading them) conclude from what is said, that some expressions glance at war, he wholly misconceives the thing I mean. My views are altogether turned to peace, which next to liberty, I hold our chiefest good. It neither is, nor was, nor ever will be my advice, *merely* to make ourselves formidable, that with better hope of success we may renew hostilities; but that *chiefly* by such providings, we may be able to secure for ourselves an honourable continuance of national tranquility. That

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is to say, it is not my advice, that we should grasp at power in order to scandalize ourselves, by making it in any way the instrument of wrong, but that by means of it, we should add weight and dignity to the moderation of our councils; not stirring envy, but extorting praise, by proving to the world, “ That
 “ we are no more disposed to offer an in-
 “ jury than to endure one.” Admitting then that this is *the true desideratum of power*, and that we cannot attain to it otherwise, than by those means which have here been described, does it not seem to be a duty imposed upon us to raise and maintain, on our part, such a

decided superiority of naval strength, as none shall dare dispute the ocean with us? And when it is known and acknowledged on all hands, as is now the case, that our present armament, so far from being equal to such expectations, is even insufficient for common defence, is it not well advised, under such circumstances, to encrease the establishment? But the mischief is, however well disposed, we have not wherewithal to furnish this encrease, seeing that we must necessarily sink under the weight of any further material accumulation of taxes. Do we not see, therefore, that let what will be our determination, under the present system of finance,

finance, whether it is voted by us to provide as we ought, or whether not, this melancholy truth still stares us in the face; “ That our weakness on one hand, “ and any attempt to remove it on the “ other, conspire alike to our undoing !” Then what would wisdom say in such a case, or how would common sense decide ? Would they not both agree in one opinion—that we should change forthwith a system which further pursued *must* terminate fatally ; and that we should instantly adopt the plan recommended, as by means of it we shall not only get rid of two thirds of the weight of our present burden, but will have it in our
power

power to encrease immediately the navy establishment, by application of an overplus of half a million. As to the navy expences at this time, we all know the amount to be 1,800,000*l. per annum**, to which, if half a million were added, our standing force might be made nearly one third part greater than it is at present : If this will not suffice, we have that before us which *must* prove effectual. We have to look forward to the falling in of annuities, by means of which the overplus will be gradually encreased, till at length the sum of it will even surpass that which is now set aside, for the

* See the Report from the Select Committee. P. 28.

service of the navy*. Of course, by steady and unvaried application of this growing fund, to the full extent of our occasions, we shall find, that instead of declining daily, we shall go on in a progressive state

* This fact will best appear from the following statement, viz.

Amount of remaining annuities	—————	£. 1,338,864 1 11
See Report from Select Committee, page 73		
Immediate surplus revenue as here proposed, page 12	—————	£. 0,500,000 0 0
Sum total of surplus revenue when the present remaining annuities shall have fallen in		£. 1,838,864 1 11
Add to this last sum the present navy expenditure	—————	£. 1,800,000 0 0
Amount of the sum which may be applied ultimately to the navy service if necessary		£. 3,638,864 1 11

But in all likelihood, when the present State Annuities shall have fallen in, together with those additional ones proposed to be granted to placemen discharged from duty*, there will rest behind after the navy is estimated, and all expences of management paid, a very considerable overplus to be well applied towards our relief.

* See Proposal, page 19.

of improvement, till finally the strength and number of our ships shall furnish hope, or rather certainty, that we shall see revived the glorious days of Edgar's reign. For that discerning and illustrious Prince kept up the Royal Navy in such constant force and so well appointed, as not only to prove sufficient for self-defence against foreign enemies, but to such degree did he make this country flourish in peace and prosperity, and so high did he raise the reputation of his power from the safeguard of his fleet, that all the neighbouring nations courted and received protection from him. Now, the kind of management respecting the navy, which was long time since introduced

roduced with so much success by Edgar, and the kind of management respecting the revenue, which is here recommended to be put in practice, is that management in either case, in which I mean to say consists *the true policy of Great Britain*. How happy then may we think ourselves, that we have it in our power to restore this Island to its pristine rank among nations, not only without being put to further charge, but by a signal reduction of those expences which bear at present so heavy upon us.

The only objection of weight which seems to lie against the proposed demolition of taxes and customs is, that merchants

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and men in trade will receive thereby an exemption from state burdens. But, is it a fact that they now contribute? Do we not know that they have it in their power to indemnify themselves against public payments, as well as they have against other expences belonging to trade? Shall we say then that they deviate in this instance from settled practice, that they do not recur to their well-known remedy, that they do not advance the price to relieve themselves, but that exquisitely just they set themselves down content with so considerable a diminution of profit as taxes must occasion? He that can credit this, must be little read in human nature.

Neither

Neither indeed can any one who judges fairly condemn the practice ; for which of us all in the same situation would be more scrupulous ? Which of us all would not avoid the taxes who could do so conscientiously, that is to say, without injury done to the revenue ? Besides, as matters stand, if any blame belongs to them, the like must fall on us, for in no one instance do our proceedings at present differ from theirs. Do we not take the best rent we can get for our lands and houses, the best rate of interest for our monies ? When was it known that we took an inferior price in either case, when a higher one was offered or might be had ? And what have they done more ? Seeing

then that we can neither find fault with, prevent, nor dissuade men from making the most they can for themselves and families in their respective situations, it cannot be supposed that merchants and men in trade, whose aim and end is to enlarge their gain, will submit voluntarily, which yet must be the case if they submit at all, to any reduction of profit by reason of taxes ; but that they, in relief of themselves as far as in them lies, will extra-load the articles in which they deal with every tax which is paid by them respectively, through whose hands commodities pass in their way to us. So that we *, who have no opportunity

• * The proprietors of lands, houses, and public funds,

like them of shifting the weight, do now actually bear, and have all along borne, to our great and irreparable loss, as things have been managed, the whole accumulated load of state burthens ! And if this is the mournful fact, if this is the fair and faithful representation of our case, if it is true I say that it must necessarily fall to our lot, without hope of relief under any management, without prospect of participation of any other members of this community, *to pay the whole* ; let common sense decide, whether it is not more advantageous for us to do so in the way proposed, than by those means which are now in use ; that is to say, whether it is not more advantageous

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to pay five shillings in the pound, than fifteen for the same purpose. And more especially when we shall get rid at once, by that arrangement which is least expensive, of all those fears which now perplex us,—of all that influence which has grown out of the debt, and saps the constitution,—of all that corruption which undermines virtue,—of all that weakness which operates as strength to our enemies,—of all that dejection which is the sure attendant of desperate fortunes, and of all that languor, loss of spirit, and despondency, which makes so many of us look up with longing eyes for shelter and protection in despotick power.

But

But I know much pains has been taken to disseminate an idea, that the wheels of government, long used to such oiling, could not otherwise be kept in motion, than by means of corruption ; and that therefore the introduction of any system subversive of such practices, so far from saving, would throw the state into fatal convulsions.

In answer to which I will not presume to say, how wicked or how weak, but this I will say, how well inclined to compliance must those men be, who are taken captive by such arguments ! With equal propriety might we plead for the continuance of every other bad habit, for all alike put on
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the same appearance of indispensable obligation. Those persons, for instance, who have most unhappily contracted a relish for spirituous liquors, are verily persuaded from the misery of their feelings, that they cannot exist from day to day without them ; whereas in fact, there is no hope of life left, but in the single circumstance of abstaining therefrom altogether in future. Neither, indeed, can there be found any other expectation of relief for this country, but in such determination. After having run the lengths which we have done with corruption, after all our sufferings from such causes, to be gravely told there is no safety but in perseverance, is as much as to say, that

that for our turn the whole course of nature has been changed, and that those things which have been our bane, are now become our antidote ! Of all absurdities which have sprung up in these times, sure there never was one that was half so barefaced a mockery of sense as this is ! What would be thought of such sort of reasoning in the case of a man who, mistaking his way, had rode up to his chin in the German Ocean ? What would our notion be of those advisers by whom he was urged *to proceed*, as the only means of escape from drowning ? What foul suspicion would not fall upon their heads ! Nor less must fall on

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theirs,

theirs, who to us, in a similar situation, recommend pertinacity.

But is it a clear case, that no other ears have been poisoned, but those of the mistreated subjects of this country? Have none but ours been tampered with? Has no pretended friend, Iago like, abused with such discourse the royal nerve? Has no suspicion of his people come across his thoughts; no throbbings of distrust, no jealous pangs been felt from such infusions? Then are there those whom slander has introduced.—But have not some such symptoms been discerned by us? Have none been seen by those who hover round the throne,

throne, and treasured up as warrants for their zeal and practices? Affuredly there must;—there is no other plea, no other explanation which can be found for the preference given to that disgraceful policy by which regal power is upheld amongst us. But let me ask these favoured worthies, are they not aware, that he who stands by gold may fall by the same; or, knowing it, do they mean to decoy to the brink the unsuspecting Monarch, for the purpose of precipitation? This is indeed his own look-out; but is it not ours also, his faithful subjects, who see the danger to apprise him of it? 'Tis ours no doubt to let him know, if yet he has to learn, that there is no empire worth hold-

ing, nor any which can be held *securely* in this country, but where royalty sits enthroned in the hearts of his people. 'Tis ours to warn before it is too late, 'ere yet by sad reverse of fortune he is taught how precarious is that King's situation, who has nothing better to trust to than the vices of his subjects ! When it is shewn to to him in what way he may reign for ever in safety without corruption, may rule in righteousness, and that council is rejected, when all good men shall give him up, which then must be the case, there needs no *hand to write upon a wall, no Daniel to expound the will of Heaven !*

But,

But, after all, perhaps I do these people wrong,—I undervalue their designs,—they play a deeper game. 'Tis not the King alone whose ruin will suffice, “ Their great revenge has stomach for us all.” They steer among the rocks to watch their time for general wreck ; their plans of safety pre-concerted, and their schemes of plunder. Now this, my countrymen, is our look-out ; and is it not the King's in like degree ? Himself and all his fortunes are they not embarked with us and ours ? The general good and safety of the whole is, therefore, his no less than our concern. No severance of our interest can take place while each performs his duty.

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The good which comes, the evil which befalls is so respectively to him and us ; nor can we have a wish of any public kind, consistently distinct from one another,—so intimately close are we conjoined, so firmly knit, and rivetted together.

These points premised, we cannot fail to see what gross absurdity, or something worse, possesses those who say it is our interest to pursue the plan recommended, but not the King's,—as if he could be hurt by our prosperity ! We may see likewise, what dread calamities await our present wayward courses. But what avails it that we *may* perceive, if blind by choice

choice we *will not* look, or deaf by sheer design, no boding voice can warn us from the gulf! It is altogether this perverseness of ours that gives hope of success to our enemies, for without that disposition on our part, there would neither be time nor opportunity to ripen their projects. But let me not in this take copy from a foe, but rather let me caution those who goad us to our fate, that they do not themselves fall into the pit prepared for others. The ground on which they tread as our conductors, is not so safe as it may seem, 'tis hollow like themselves. The council which they give involves their own with our destruction. It pre-supposes a line which is no where

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to be found in the constitution, a line of separation between the interests of King and People, a line detestable, which he who draws or tempts to draw,—I speak it to their face, *committeth treason*. Whatever, therefore, they may strive to do by secret insinuation, there is not a man of them all who dares avow this same advice; which circumstance alone pronounces judgment on the doctrine it conveys, declaring it to be, what it really is, *most heterodox and damnable*.

O! then for that propitious day, when yielding to the impulse of his princely mind, or moved thereto by virtuous entreaties,

treaties, our gracious Lord shall throw himself upon the love and loyalty of his people ! My life and all my fortunes shall be forfeit, if he does not feel himself more of a King after that consummation, and if there does not spring up in his heart more real joy in one short hour, than in the whole accumulation of years which yet are numbered of his luckless reign. .

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Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

Jan. 1, 1787.



